

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
HOUSTON DIVISION

RICHARD ROEGNER,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	CIVIL ACTION
vs.)	
)	Case No.
HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP,)	
)	
Defendant.)	

COMPLAINT

COMES NOW, RICHARD ROEGNER, by and through the undersigned counsel, and files this, his Complaint against Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.* (“ADA”) and the ADA’s Accessibility Guidelines, 28 C.F.R. Part 36 (“ADAAG”). In support thereof, Plaintiff respectfully shows this Court as follows:

JURISDICTION

1. This Court has original jurisdiction over the action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343 for Plaintiff’s claims pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*, based upon Defendant’s failure to remove physical barriers to access and violations of Title III of the ADA.

PARTIES

2. Plaintiff, RICHARD ROEGNER (hereinafter “Plaintiff”) is, and has been at all times relevant to the instant matter, a natural person residing in Houston, Texas (Harris County).

3. Plaintiff is disabled as defined by the ADA.

4. Plaintiff is required to traverse in a wheelchair and is substantially limited in performing one or more major life activities, including but not limited to: walking and standing.

5. Plaintiff uses a wheelchair for mobility purposes.

6. Plaintiff is also an independent advocate of the rights of similarly situated disabled persons and is a “tester” for the purpose of enforcing Plaintiff’s civil rights, monitoring, determining and ensuring whether places of public accommodation are in compliance with the ADA. His motivation to return to a location, in part, stems from a desire to utilize ADA litigation to make Plaintiff’s community more accessible for Plaintiff and others; and pledges to do whatever is necessary to create the requisite standing to confer jurisdiction upon this Court so an injunction can be issued correcting the numerous ADA violations on this property, including returning to the Property within six months after it is accessible (“Advocacy Purposes”).

7. Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP (hereinafter “HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP”), is a Texas limited partnership that transacts business in the State of Texas and within this judicial district.

8. Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, may be properly served with process for service via its Registered Agent, to wit: c/o Ajay G. Thomas, Registered Agent, 7457 Harwin, Suite 208, Houston, TX 77036.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

9. On or about February 27, 2021, Plaintiff was a customer at “Tacos Mexico” a business located at 11132 Airline Drive, Houston, TX 77037 and also was a customer at “1.00 \$ Plus Store” a business located at 11122 Airline Drive, Houston, TX 77037, referenced herein collectively as “Tacos Mexico and 1.00 \$ Plus Store”. Attached is a receipt documenting Plaintiff’s purchase at Tacos Mexico. *See* Exhibit 1. Also attached is a photograph documenting Plaintiff’s visit to the Property while at Tacos Mexico. *See* Exhibit 2. Attached is a receipt documenting Plaintiff’s purchase at 1.00 \$ Plus Store. *See* Exhibit 3. Also attached is a

photograph documenting Plaintiff's visit to the Property while at 1.00 \$ Plus Store. *See* Exhibit 4.

10. Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, is the owner or co-owner of the real property and improvements that Tacos Mexico and 1.00 \$ Plus Store are situated upon and that is the subject of this action, referenced herein as the "Property."

11. Plaintiff lives 6 miles from the Property.

12. Plaintiff's access to the business(es) located 11100 Airline Drive, Houston, TX 77037, Harris County Property Appraiser's property identification number 0420740000103 ("the Property"), and/or full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, foods, drinks, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein were denied and/or limited because of his disabilities, and he will be denied and/or limited in the future unless and until Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, is compelled to remove the physical barriers to access and correct the ADA violations that exist at the Property, including those set forth in this Complaint.

13. Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, as property owner, is responsible for complying with the ADA for both the exterior portions and interior portions of the Property. Even if there is a lease between Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP and the tenant allocating responsibilities for ADA compliance within the unit the tenant operates, that lease is only between the property owner and the tenant and does not abrogate the Defendant's independent requirement to comply with the ADA for the entire Property it owns, including the interior portions of the Property which are public accommodations. *See* 28 CFR § 36.201(b).

14. Plaintiff has visited the Property at least once before as a customer and advocate

for the disabled. Plaintiff intends on revisiting the Property within six months after the barriers to access detailed in this Complaint are removed and the Property is accessible again. The purpose of the revisit is to be a return customer, to determine if and when the Property is made accessible and to maintain standing for this lawsuit for Advocacy Purposes.

15. Plaintiff intends on revisiting the Property to purchase goods and/or services as a return customer living in the near vicinity as well as for Advocacy Purposes, but does not intend to re-expose himself to the ongoing barriers to access and engage in a futile gesture of visiting the public accommodation known to Plaintiff to have numerous and continuing barriers to access.

16. Plaintiff travelled to the Property as a customer and as an independent advocate for the disabled, encountered the barriers to access the Property that are detailed in this Complaint, engaged those barriers, suffered legal harm and legal injury, and will continue to suffer such harm and injury as a result of the illegal barriers to access present at the Property.

COUNT I
VIOLATIONS OF THE ADA AND ADAAG

17. On July 26, 1990, Congress enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act 42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.*

18. Congress found, among other things, that:

- (i) some 43,000,000 Americans have one or more physical or mental disabilities, and this number is increasing as the population as a whole is growing older;
- (ii) historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities, and, despite some improvements, such forms of discrimination against individuals with disabilities continue to be a serious and pervasive social problem;
- (iii) discrimination against individuals with disabilities persists in such critical areas as employment, housing public accommodations, education,

transportation, communication, recreation, institutionalization, health services, voting, and access to public services;

- (iv) individuals with disabilities continually encounter various forms of discrimination, including outright intentional exclusion, the discriminatory effects of architectural, transportation, and communication barriers, overprotective rules and policies, failure to make modifications to existing facilities and practices, exclusionary qualification standards and criteria, segregation, and relegation to lesser service, programs, activities, benefits, jobs, or other opportunities; and
- (v) the continuing existence of unfair and unnecessary discrimination and prejudice denies people with disabilities the opportunity to compete on an equal basis and to pursue those opportunities for which our free society is justifiably famous, and costs the United States billions of dollars in unnecessary expenses resulting from dependency and non-productivity.

42 U.S.C. § 12101(a)(1) - (3), (5) and (9).

- 19. Congress explicitly stated that the purpose of the ADA was to:
 - (i) provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities;
 - (ii) provide a clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities; and
 - * * * * *
 - (iv) invoke the sweep of congressional authority, including the power to enforce the fourteenth amendment and to regulate commerce, in order to address the major areas of discrimination faced day-to-day by people with disabilities.

42 U.S.C. § 12101(b)(1)(2) and (4).

20. The congressional legislation provided places of public accommodation one and a half years from the enactment of the ADA to implement its requirements.

21. The effective date of Title III of the ADA was January 26, 1992 (or January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

22. The Property is a public accommodation and service establishment.

23. Pursuant to the mandates of 42 U.S.C. § 12134(a), on July 26, 1991, the Department of Justice and Office of Attorney General promulgated federal regulations to implement the requirements of the ADA. 28 C.F.R. Part 36.

24. Public accommodations were required to conform to these regulations by January 26, 1992 (or by January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

25. The Property must be, but is not, in compliance with the ADA and ADAAG.

26. Plaintiff has attempted to, and has to the extent possible, accessed the Property in his capacity as a customer at the Property as well as an independent advocate for the disabled, but could not fully do so because of his disabilities resulting from the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Property that preclude and/or limit his access to the Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

27. Plaintiff intends to visit the Property again in the very near future as a customer and as an independent advocate for the disabled, in order to utilize all of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations commonly offered at the Property, but will be unable to fully do so because of his disability and the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Property that preclude and/or limit his access to the Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

28. Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, has discriminated against Plaintiff (and others with disabilities) by denying his access to, and full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations of the Property, as prohibited by, and by failing to remove architectural barriers as required by, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv).

29. Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, will continue to discriminate against Plaintiff and others with disabilities unless and until Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, is compelled to remove all physical barriers that exist at the Property, including those specifically set forth herein, and make the Property accessible to and usable by Plaintiff and other persons with disabilities.

30. A specific list of unlawful physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations which Plaintiff experienced and/or observed, or was made aware of prior to the filing of this Complaint, that precluded and/or limited Plaintiff's access to the Property and the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations of the Property include, but are not limited to:

ACCESSIBLE ELEMENTS:

- (i) Near Unit 11122, there is one accessible parking space that does not have a marked access aisle in violation of Section 502.3.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the accessible entrances of the Property.
- (ii) Near Unit 11122, the accessible parking space is missing an identification sign in violation of Section 502.6 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to locate an accessible parking space.

- (iii) Near Unit 11122, due to a failure to enact a policy of proper maintenance, the accessible parking space is not adequately marked as the lines indicating the dimensions of the accessible parking space are faded and is in violation of Section 502.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to locate an accessible parking space.
- (iv) Near Unit 11122, the accessible parking space is not level due to the presence of an accessible ramp in the accessible parking space in violation of Section 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property.
- (v) Near Unit 11122, the accessible curb ramp is improperly protruding into the accessible parking space in violation of Section 406.5 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. This violation would make it difficult and dangerous for Plaintiff to exit/enter their vehicle.
- (vi) Near Unit 11122, there is a vertical rise at the base of the accessible ramp of approximately 2 inches rendering this ramp inaccessible, in violation of Sections 303.2 and 405.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access public features of the Property.
- (vii) Near Unit 11122, the Property has an accessible ramp that lacks finished edges or edge protection and/or is otherwise in violation of Section 405.9 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property.
- (viii) Near Unit 11122 and Unit 11114, due to the fact that a parked vehicle will block the accessible route, the Property lacks an accessible route from these two

accessible parking spaces to the accessible entrance of the Property in violation of Section 208.3.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property.

- (ix) Near Unit 11122, due to the presence of a two inch vertical rise at the base of the accessible ramp serving the accessible parking space here, the Property lacks an accessible route from this accessible parking space to the accessible entrance of the Property in violation of Section 208.3.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property.
- (x) Near Unit 11122, there is an opening between the accessible ramp and the sidewalk of at least 1 inch in violation of section 302.3 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. This opening also creates a vertical rise at the top of the accessible ramp in excess of ½ inch in violation of section 303.2 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. These barriers to access would make it difficult and dangerous for Plaintiff to utilize this ramp as an accessible route.
- (xi) Near Unit 11122 and Unit 11114, due to the lack of an access aisle, when vehicles are parked adjacent to these accessible parking spaces, there is not a 36 inch accessible route allowing enough room for a disabled individual in a wheelchair to enter and exit his/her vehicle. As such, the Property lacks an accessible route from these two accessible parking spaces to the accessible entrance of the Property in violation of Section 208.3.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (xii) Near Unit 11114, the accessible parking space is missing an identification sign in violation of Section 502.6 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to locate an accessible parking space.

- (xiii) Near Unit 11114, the accessible parking space does not have a marked access aisle in violation of Section 502.3.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the accessible entrances of the Property.
- (xiv) Near Unit 11114, the accessible parking space is not level due to the presence of an accessible ramp in the accessible parking space in violation of Section 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property.
- (xv) Near Unit 11114, the accessible curb ramp is improperly protruding into the accessible parking space in violation of Section 406.5 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. This violation would make it difficult and dangerous for Plaintiff to exit/enter their vehicle.
- (xvi) Near Unit 11114, the Property has an accessible ramp leading from the accessible parking space to the accessible entrances with a slope exceeding 1:12 in violation of Section 405.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property.
- (xvii) Near Unit 11114, the Property has an accessible ramp that lacks finished edges or edge protection and/or is otherwise in violation of Section 405.9 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property.
- (xviii) Due to the barriers to access identified in paragraph 30(vi), (viii) and (ix), the Property lacks an access route from site arrival points such as the public streets and sidewalks to the accessible entrance in violation of Section 206.2.1 of the

2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the Property.

(xix) The total number of accessible parking spaces is inadequate and is in violation of Section 208.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. There are approximately 80 total parking spaces (including the rear parking lot), which requires a minimum of four accessible parking spaces, but there are only two accessible parking spaces. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to locate an accessible parking space.

(xx) There are no van accessible parking spaces in violation of section 208.2.4 and 502.6 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards.

(xxi) Defendants fail to adhere to a policy, practice and procedure to ensure that all facilities are readily accessible to and usable by disabled individuals.

31. The violations enumerated above may not be a complete list of the barriers, conditions or violations encountered by Plaintiff and/or which exist at the Property.

32. Plaintiff requires an inspection of the Property in order to determine all of the discriminatory conditions present at the Property in violation of the ADA.

33. The removal of the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations alleged herein is readily achievable and can be accomplished and carried out without significant difficulty or expense. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv); 42 U.S.C. § 12181(9); 28 C.F.R. § 36.304.

34. All of the violations alleged herein are readily achievable to modify to the Property into compliance with the ADA.

35. Upon information and good faith belief, the removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Property is readily achievable because the nature and cost of

the modifications are relatively low.

36. Upon information and good faith belief, the removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Property is readily achievable because Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, has the financial resources to make the necessary modifications. According to the Property Appraiser, the Appraised value of the Property is \$1,131,690.00.

37. The removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Property is also readily achievable because Defendant has available to it a \$5,000.00 tax credit and up to a \$15,000.00 tax deduction from the IRS for spending money on accessibility modifications.

38. Upon information and good faith belief, the Property has been altered since 2010.

39. In instances where the 2010 ADAAG standards do not apply, the 1991 ADAAG standards apply, and all of the alleged violations set forth herein can be modified to comply with the 1991 ADAAG standards.

40. Plaintiff is without adequate remedy at law, is suffering irreparable harm, and reasonably anticipates that he will continue to suffer irreparable harm unless and until Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, is required to remove the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Property, including those alleged herein.

41. Plaintiff's requested relief serves the public interest.

42. The benefit to Plaintiff and the public of the relief outweighs any resulting detriment to Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP.

43. Plaintiff's counsel is entitled to recover its reasonable attorney's fees and costs of litigation from Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§

12188 and 12205.

44. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12188(a), this Court is provided authority to grant injunctive relief to Plaintiff, including the issuance of an Order directing Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, to modify the Property to the extent required by the ADA.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays as follows:

- (a) That the Court find Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, in violation of the ADA and ADAAG;
- (b) That the Court issue a permanent injunction enjoining Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, from continuing their discriminatory practices;
- (c) That the Court issue an Order requiring Defendant, HILLCROFT SHOPPING PLAZA, LP, to (i) remove the physical barriers to access and (ii) alter the Property to make it readily accessible to and useable by individuals with disabilities to the extent required by the ADA;
- (d) That the Court award Plaintiff his reasonable attorneys' fees, litigation expenses and costs; and

- (e) That the Court grant such further relief as deemed just and equitable in light of the circumstances.

Dated: April 5, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Douglas S. Schapiro

Douglas S. Schapiro, Esq.

Southern District of Texas ID No. 3182479

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